

PALMER THOMPSON  
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THE TERROR OF FORTUNE'S TREE  
by  
Palmer Thompson

CAST

MARK TRAIL

CHERRY DAVIES

MA HUGGINS

JEFF MARBERRY

(LAFE CHANDLER  
(NARRATOR

ANDY

NARRATOR: The lengthening shadows of twilight settle gently on the rich Willamette Valley region of Oregon. The lush fruit bearing trees in the orchard dotted valley stand like silent sentinels in the gathering dusk. Suddenly the darkness is pierced by two faint lights on an auto moving slowly up a dirt road that borders a fruit farm owned by Ma Huggins.

(SLOW CAR MOTOR IN BG)

The car pulls over to the side of the road and stops.

(CAR MOTOR STOPS)

The lights go out and two men Jeff Marberry and Lafe Chandler emerge from the car.

(CAR DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES)

(FOOTSTEPS ON DIRT)

JEFF: Got your flashlight, Lafe?

LAFE: Yeah. When's this gonna stop, Jeff?

JEFF: When we find what we're looking for.

LAFE: We'd have a better chance if it was a needle in a haystack.

JEFF: Maybe, but no needle is worth fifty thousand, maybe a hundred thousand dollars.

LAFE: Ain't you dreaming kinda high Jeff?

JEFF: Not for something that could go on paying us money every year for the rest of our lives.

LAFE: The rest of our lives.

JEFF: No more fruit picking, no more breaking your back hauling crates in stinking warehouses, no more working your head off to scrap together four bits for breakfast.



LAFE: You sure paint a pretty picture Jeff.

JEFF: Yeah, but we ain't gonna finish# it standing here.  
Let's get busy and start looking.

LAFE: Right.

JEFF: And keep your eye out for Ma Huggins. I hear she's  
a tough old biddy. Don't hold with trespassing on  
her land. Remember we're looking for a handfull of  
treasure, not a bellyful of buckshot.

MUSIC: - - - STING

(FOOTSTEPS ON DIRT)

(FOOTSTEPS STOP)

LAFE: Jeff! Jeff!

(FOOTSTEPS ON DIRT FADE ON)

JEFF: (FADING ON) What is it, Lafe? Did you find it?

LAFE: No.....

JEFF: Then why.....

LAFE: I'm just bleary eyed from looking. Can't we knock  
off for tonight. We can come out again tomorrow  
night.

JEFF: An suppose Ma Hu#gins finds it before us?

LAFE: She don't even know there's anything worth looking  
for on her land .

JEFF: She could stumble across it like you did#.

LAFE: The chances are one in a million and.....

JEFF: I ain't taking that one. We keep looking until  
dawn breaks. Might be just the next.....

(WAY OFF FOOTSTEPS THROUGH UNDERBRUSH)

LAFE: Shut up, Jeff.

(CONTINUE FOOTSTEPS OFF)

LAFE: (SOTTO) Who is it? Can you see?

JEFF: (SOTTO) Ma Huggins. She's carrying a gun.

(FOOTSTEPS A LITTLE CLOSER)

LAFE: (SOTTO) Sounds like she's heading this way.

JEFF: (SOTTO) Yeah. We'd better.....

(SHARP SNAP OF TWIG ON MIKE)

LAFE: (SOTTO) Doggone!

MA: (OFF MIKE) Who is it! Anyone over there?

(PAUSE)

MA: (OFF MIKE) Well maybe you'll answer to a load of  
buckshot!

JEFF: Lafe, she's aiming.....

LAFE: Let's git!

(FOOTSTEPS RUNNING THROUGH UNDEBRUSH)

(OFF MIKE BLAST OF SHOTGUN)

LAFE: (YELL OF PAIN)

MUSIC: -- STING

(BACON SIZZLING IN FRYING PAN)

(FOOTSTEPS FADE ON)

MARK: Mnn. That's good Cherry. Nothing like the smell of  
crisp bacon to start the day off right.

CHERRY: It's almost ready, Mark. Want to give my dad a yell  
for breakfast?

MARK: Just gave Professor Davis his mail in the study. Said  
he didn't want any breakfast.

CHERRY: That father of mine.

MARK: Better leave him alone, Cherry. He's hot on the trail  
of some new theory of treating this elm tree disease that's



MARK: (CONTINUED) epidemic now.

CHERRY: Well I guess one more missed meal won't kill. Was there anything in the mail for me Mark?

MARK: No, and just one letter ##### for me.

CHERRY: Who's it from? Sit down, I can at least serve you breakfast.

MARK: Ma Huggins. Remember her.

CHERRY: Ma Huggins? Oh yes. The widow of the Forest Ranger in Oregon.

(ENVELOPE TORN OPEN)

CHERRY: What's she got to say?

MARK: It's an invitation to visit here. Read it.

CHERRY: Willamette Valley. That's one section of Oregon I've never been in.

MARK: Beautiful place. Great fruit country.

CHERRY: You going to go?

MARK: I think I will. Like to come along, Cherry?

CHERRY: Love to, but.....

MARK: Reading between the lines, I think this is more than just a social invitation from Ma Huggins.

CHERRY: How so?

MARK: Get this sentence in the letter. "I hope you'll come Mark. It will be a pleasure to have some invited guests, after all the uninvited ones I've been having."

CHERRY: Uninvited guests?

MARK: I've got a feeling Cherry, that Ma wants our help in getting rid of them....and if that's the case....she's got it.

MUSIC: -- BRIDGE --

(CAR MOTOR UNDER)

MARK: Shouldn't be far now, Cherry. This is the dirt road  
Ma's fruit farm is on.

CHERRY: We're getting in pretty late. Think she'll be awake?

(ANDY WHIMPERS)

MARK: Easy, Andy. We'll be there in a little while. She'll  
be awake all right, Cherry. We'll reach her place  
before nine thirty.

(ANDY WHIMPERS)

CHERRY: Better make that nine thirty-five, Mark. And stop  
the car.

MARK: Eh?

CHERRY: I think Andy wants to stretch his legs.

MARK: Oh. Yes.

(CAR TO STOP)

(CAR DOOR OPENS)

MARK: Okay, boy.

(ANDY BARKS, LEAPS OUT OF CAR)

MARK: How about an apple Cherry?

CHERRY: Swiping apples, Mark. I thought you gave that up years  
ago.

MARK: Not when it's for my best gal. Besides we're already on  
Ma Huggin's property. I'm sure she won't mind.

CHERRY: In that case all right.

MARK: Come on then. Select your own, right off the tree.

(FOOTSTEPS ON UNDERBRUSH)

(FOOTSTEPS STOP)

MARK: Here. Wait'll I bend this branch down. You can pick one  
yourself.



CHERRY: Oh, no. The biggest and best are always on the top<sup>#</sup> branches. I remember that from when I was a girl.

MARK: And I remember having to climb for them.

CHERRY: That's right. Start climbing.

MARK: Just like a woman.

(MARK CLIMBS TREE)

MARK: (SLIGHTLY OFF) I hope this is high enough for.....

CHERRY: Higher, Mark. Or are you getting old.

MARK: (SLIGHTLY OFF) Old! I'll show you.

(MARK CLIMBING TREE)

(ANDY FADES ON PANTING)

CHERRY: What do you think, Andy. Does he look like a monkey to you.

MARK: (FARTHER OFF) I heard that. Monkey, eh? Well here's a nice red coconut for you.

(APPLE DROPS TO GROUND)

CHERRY: Missed it, Mark. Throw me another one.

(ANDY STARTS TO GROWL)

CHERRY: What's the matter Andy?

(ANDY'S GROWL CHANGES TO A SNARL)

MARK: (FARTHER OFF MIKE) Try and get this one, butterfingers.

CHERRY: Mark, something's wrong. Andy....

(OFF MIKE BLAST OF SHOT GUN)

MARK: (YELL OF PAIN)

CHERRY: Mark!

(MARK FALLS THROUGH TREE BRANCHES)

MUSIC: STING FOR SEMI-CURTAIN TO COMMERCIAL

NARRATOR: A shot in the night, a yell of pain, and Mark plunges to earth. We'll learn in a moment what happens when we

NARRATOR: (CONTINUED) return to Mark Trail, but now....(COMMERCIAL)



NARRATOR: Now back to Mark Trail. Mark and Cherry on their way to visit the Oregon Fruit farm of Ma Huggins, a friend of theirs, stopped by the side of the road for a brief rest. As Mark climbed a tree to pick some apples his dog Andy started growling, there was a shot, Mark yelled, let go of the branch he was holding and plummeted to earth.

(MARK FALLING THROUGH TREES)

CHERRY: Mark!

(ANDY BARKS)

(MARK HITS GROUND)

CHERRY: Mark are you.....

MARK: Down, Cherry. On the ground. Quick! Oooo.

(CHERRY FALLS TO GROUND)

CHERRY: You're hit, Mark. What....

MARK: Buckshot. My arm.

(ANDY GROWLS)

MARK: Quiet, Andy!

CHERRY: I don't.....who.....

MA: (OFF MIKE) All right, you down there. If you don't want another dose of buckshot, stand up and show yourself.

CHERRY: A woman!

MARK: That's Ma. Ma Huggin's. (UP) Ma...it's Mark Trail.  
Mark Trail!

MA: ~~####~~ (OFF) Mark Trail!

MARK: Yes. Hold your fire.

(FADE ON FOOTSTEPS THROUGH UNDERBRUSH)

MA: (FADING ON) Cherry, Mark.....was it you I shot at?

MARK: And hit.

CHERRY: Is it bad, Mark?

MA: Well why by all that's holy didn't you tell a body you were coming?

CHERRY: We though we'd answer your invitation in person instead of by mail. Give you a surprise.

MARK: Instead we got one. Ooo! Ouch. My arm feels like it's full of pins and needles.

MA: Full of buckshot. We'd better get up to my place and start picking it out.

CHERRY: Our car's down by the road. Come on Mark, I'll give you a hand.

MARK: I can manage all right. ##### I'm just  
## glad I didn't have my back turned when Ma started shooting.  
I'd be eating off a ## mantle piece for weeks.

MA: Maybe you'll still be. Swiping apples in the dark.  
I've tanned many a boy's rear for that, and I'm not so old that I still couldn't tan yours, Mark Trail. Now get in that car. I'm short of buckshot, and I aim to cut down expenses by picking some out of your hide.##

MUSIC: -- BRIDGE --

MA: Cherry, you hold this cotton and the bottle of alchohol. Every time I pick out a piece of shot with these tweezers you swab the spot to keep it sterilized.

CHERRY: All right, Ma.

MA: Ready, Mark?

MARK: Ready. (PAUSE) Ooo! Hey! That alcohoh stings.

MA: It's meant to.

MARK: Ooo!



MA: Serves you right for trying to surprise an old lady.

MARK: All right, Ma, what's behind....ouch!.....all this.

MA: Don't like prowlers around.....

MARK: Ooo!

MA: .....my property.

CHERRY: Prowlers?

MA: Yep. Been someone prowling around most every night  
for the past two weeks.

MARK: Searching for.....ouch! ....something?

MA: Don't know. Sent them packing three nights ago with a  
load of buckshot. Though you was them tonight.

MARK: That's.....ow!.....obvious. Do you have.....ooo! hey!

MA: Hold still! Getting most of it out.

MARK: And a lot of my arm with it.

MA: Now Mark Trail if you.....

(ANDY GROWLS)

MARK: Hold it, Ma.

(ANDY GROWLS AGAIN)

MARK: What is it, Andy.

(ANDY SNARLS)

CHERRY: He's going to the door, Mark.

MARK: There's someone out there,

MA: I'll get my shot gun.

MARK: Let Andy out Cherry.

(DOOR OPENS)

(ANDY BARKS)

(BARKING FADES OFF)

MARK: Come on. We'll follow him.

MA: I'm with you.

(RUNNING FOOTSTEPS THROUGH UNDERBRUSH)

CHERRY: Look, Mark. Down there, by the road.

MARK: Two men.

MA: Andy's caught up with one!

(ANDY SNARLING WAY OFF MIKE)

MARK: Put that gun down, Ma. You'll hit Andy.

MA: Forgot.

CHERRY: He's shaking Andy off, Mark.

MA: They're getting in the car. They'll get away.

(OFF CAR MOTOR STARTS AND RACES OFF)

MARK: Andy....Andy. Come back boy!

(ANDY PADES ON BARKING)

MARK: That's all right, boy. You did your best.

MA: See what I mean, Mark. Prowlers. And I got a feeling it's the same two men every# time.

(FOOTSTEPS ON UNDERBRUSH)

CHERRY: But what could they be searching for?

MA: Don't ask me. Ain't anything worth searching for that I ~~no#/#/#/#/#~~ know of.

MARK: When did you first notice them, Ma.

MA: About two weeks ago. Heard something out in the orchard. Looked. And saw flashlights searching through the trees.

CHERRY: Through the trees?

MA: Yep.

(DOOR CLOSES)

MA: Now sit down, Mark and I'll got to work on that buckshot again.

CHERRY: What could they expect to find in the trees.



MA: Don't ask me. I've never found anything but apples.  
And not too many of them sometimes.

MARK: Maybe that's....ooo!.....what they were looking for.

CHERRY: Apples.

MARK: That's what# you find in apple trees. Ouch!

MA: Hold still, Mark.

MARK: The Buck shot can wait for a little while, Ma. I take  
it you've harvested some of your crop already?

MA: Bout half. Why?

MARK: All sold?

MA: No. Still got quite a few boxes in storage.

MARK: Well let's take a look at them. If my hunch is right we  
may find the answer to your night prowlers.

MUSIC: -- BRIDGE

MA: Here you are, Mark. Three empty crates.

CHERRY: Now what to we do with them?

MARK: We'll each take an empty crate Cherry, and a full crate.  
Then we'll dump the full crate in the empty crate and keep  
doing that on the chance that we'll find what I'm looking  
for.

CHERRY: What are you looking for?

MARK: I told you, Cherry. An# apple.

MA: Stop having sport with us, Mark. There's thousand's of  
Baldwin apples in here and.....

MARK: The one I'm looking for isn't a Baldwin. In fact I don't  
know what kind of an apple it is, but if my guess is right  
we'll know it when we see it.

MUSIC: -- STING

(APPLES ROLLING INTO CRATE)

(MORE APPLES ROLLING INTO CRATE)

MA: Mark, we've gone through nigh on to fifty crates of apples already.

MARK: We're going through them all, Ma. And probably through every tree in the orchard.

MA: But what are we.....

CHERRY: Mark! Look.

MARK: What is it, Cherry?

CHERRY: This crate here. Look at this apple.

MARK: That's it, Cherry. I'll bet my bottom dollar on it.

CHERRY: And there are five or ten more in the crate. Here, Ma, take one.

MA: Well, by.....I've never seen an apple like this before.....three colors.

MARK: In three almost perfect segments.

CHERRY: What is it, Mark?

MARK: You're the expert Ma. Taste each segment sperately. You Tell us what it is.

(BITE ON APPLE)

(CHEW APPLE)

MA: Tastes like a yello delicious apple.

MARK: Try the deep red segment.

(CHEW APPLE)

MA: By all....it tastes like a Baldwin

MARK: And now the light speckled red section.

(CHEW APPLE)

MA: I never.....looks liek and tastes like Macintosh.

CHERRY: That can't be, Ma.



MA: I've eaten enough apples in my life, Cherry to know what the different kinds taste like.

CHERRY: It must be a hoax of some sort.

MARK: No, Cherry, that apple is what botanists call a sport a mutation, a freak of nature. Somewhere in Ma Huggin's orchard is the tree that grew that apple.

CHERRY: I can't believe it.

MARK: It's true enough. As a matter of fact I remember reading about a thing like this in National Geographic Magazine some years ago. An apple with four colors and four flavors found in a Washington State orchard, unfortunately they never discovered the tree that grew it.

MA: So this is what them fellows were searching for.

MARK: Yes, and if we find it, it means a pretty penny for you Ma.

CHERRY: How, Mark.

MARK: You can patent a plant like an invention. We find the tree that grew this apple, and Ma can transplant it, develop the seedlings and get a royalty on everyone she sells.

MA: From just one tree?

MARK: Why not. Every single Macintosh apple in the world today came from just one tree.

CHERRY: How do you mean that, Mark?

MARK: Well the first Macintosh apples were discovered way back in 1796, in Ontario, Canada...by a man named.....

CHERRY: Macintosh?

MARK: Right. He found a small grove of wild trees bearing the apple that has his name now. Then a fire destroyed every

MARK: (CONTINUED) tree in the grove but one. He kept that one alive, and the result is Macintosh apples today.

MA: You oughta be running an orchard, Mark, with what you know about apples.

MARK: Well Macintosh never collected on his dâscovery because there was no plant patent# act in those days.

CHERRY: Then if we can find the tree that bore this apple.....

MARK: Ma Huggins stand to collect a fortune, and we'll start searching for it first thing tomorrow morning.

MUSIC: \_ \_ BRIDGE \_ \_

(FEET THROUGH UNDERBRUSH)

(FEET STOP)

JEFF: There's a good sppt, Lafe. That knoll over there.

(FEET THROUGH UNDREBRUSH)

JEFF: Just about, Perfect, eh Lafe.

LAFF: Yeah. We can see the whole orchard, and Ma Huggins house too.

JEFF: Look, that car down there. Told you she had visitors.

LAFF: There's the mutt that almost took my arm off, I'd like to.....

JEFF: Someone coming out of the house, Lafe. Give me the spyglasses.

LAFF: Here.

(PAUSE)

LAFF: Who is it?

JEFF: Ma, and a man and a girl. Lafe! Here take the glasses, look what he's holding in his hand.

LAFF: An apple. Like the one's I found in that crate that come to the warehouse from Ma's place.



JEFF: Yeah....yeah..

LAFF: Look. That fellow's giving them orders. They're going to spread out and search for the tree that bore it, I'll bet.

JEFF: Course they are. They ain't fools.

LAFF: Looks like we missed the boat again, Jeff.

JEFF: No we ain't.

LAFF: What you talking about?

JEFF: Maybe they find the tree, but we'll be the one's get rich from it.

LAFF: Yeah? How?

JEFF: We're going to sit here. Keep our eye on every one of them. If they find the tree, we'll mark it out, then go down prune some branches off it, and then burn the tree.

LAFF: Might work, Jeff.

JEFF: It will work. We'll spell each other with the glasses. We don't take our eyes off them until they've found what we want.

MUSIC: -- BRIDGE --

JEFF: Laff. Laff.

LAFF: Eh. Sorry Jeff, dozed off. My eye's are getting bleary from looking through these glasses.

JEFF: I told you.....

LAFF: Jeff. The girl.

JEFF: What's the matter?

LAFF: She ain't looking no more. She's heading for Ma and the guy on the other side of the orchard.

JEFF: Heading for.....Let me see.

LAFF: She must have found the tree, Jeff. And I didn't see which

LAFE: (CONTINUED) one.

JEFF: Come on.

LAFE: What for?

JEFF: We can cut her off before she reaches them. Once we get our hands on her ~~she'll tell us everything we need to know~~ we'll persuade her to tell us exactly where the tree is.

MUSIC: -- STING.

(WAY OFF FOOTSTEPS THROUGH UNDERBRUSH)

JEFF: She's coming. When we jump her you clap your hand over her mouth so she can't scream.

LAFE: Right, Jeff.

(FOOTSTEPS FADE ON MIKE)

JEFF: Okay, Lafe!

CHERRY: What....I....He....

(STRUGGLE)

LAFE: Simmer down, girl, if you don't want to get hurt.

CHERRY: (MUFFLED STRUGGLEING) Let me go! Let me go!

JEFF: Miss, we're looking for the tree you found. I ain't got time to be polite about asking where it is.

CHERRY: (MUFFLED, STRUGGLING) I won't tell you. Let me go.

JEFF: So I'm using this knife to ask questions. It's right at your throat. Give me the right answer and it goes on farther. Give me the wrong answer, and you go no farther.

MUSIC: -- SEMI-CURTAIN TO COMMERCIAL

NARRATOR: Cherry in the hands of two dangerous men, a knife at her throat. Will she tell them what they want to know, will they carry out their plan to burn the valuable tree? We'll learn in a moment, but first.....(COMMERCIAL)



NARRATOR: Now back to Mark Trail. Cherry has discovered the Apple tree in Ma Huggin's orchard that bore the freak three colored, three flavored apple that may mean a fortune to Ma. Hurrying back to tell Ma and Mark of her discovery she was captured by Jeff Marberry and Lafe Chandler, two men who have been seeking the same tree for weeks.

JEFF: Now, Listen, Miss. Lafe's going to take his hand from your mouth. Just one scream, and it will be your last. Okay, Lafe.

CHERRY: Who are you? What.....

JEFF: That ain't important. What's important is where's the tree?

CHERRY: I don't know.....

JEFF: Don't play dumb with me, Miss. We've been looking for that ree for a long time. We intend to find it...with your help.

LAFF: Maybe if you cut her a little, it will help her memory Jeff.

JEFF: Will it, Miss. This knife is real sharp.

CHERRY: I....I'll tell you where it is.

JEFF: You'll do better. You'll show us.

CHERRY: All right.

LAFF: And don't try breaking away.

JEFF: That's good advice, Lafe's gitting you. Because I can throuw this knife a lot faster than you can run. Now Start moving, Miss.

MUSIC: -- BRIDGE --

(FOOTSTEPS THROUGH UNDERBRUSH)

(FOOTSTEPS STOP)

LAFE: Look, Jeff. The drops on the ground. The three colored apple.

JEFF: This the one, lady.

CHERRY: Yes. There's the mark I made on it.

LAFE: Look up there, Jeff. Those ~~four~~ four branches. Same kind of apples.

JEFF: I guess we've hit it, Lafe.

LAFE: Yeah.

CHERRY: What are you.....

JEFF: Grab her arms. Lafe. Hold her tight.

CHERRY: Let go of me!

LAFE: Stop kicking, I'll break your leg. What you going to do Jeff?

JEFF: Arrange an accident. Let's find a nice hefty rock.

LAFE: Rock?

JEFF: Sure. The lady was climbing trees looking for apples, she fell, hit her head on a rock and fractured her skull. What could be more natural.

LAFE: Now that's real neat, Jeff.

JEFF: Of course we'd better take her somewhere else. We don't want no snooping around this tree.

LAFE: Come on, Lady.

CHERRY: Let me go. Let me go!

LAFE: Ow! She bit me! Grab her Jeff.

JEFF: You little spitfire.

CHERRY: Let go! I'll.....



(ANDY BARKING OFF MIKE)

LAPE: Jeff, the dog!

JEFF: Here take the knife. I'll hold her.

(ANDY FADES ON)

CHERRY: (YELLING) Mark! Mark!

JEFF: Shut up you!

(SIAP ON FACE)

(ANDY SNARLS)

LAPE: Jeff, he's going for you!

MARK: (OFF) Cherry.....where....!

JEFF: Lape! Get the dog off me. Use the knife!

MARK: (FADE ON) Oh, no you don't!

CHERRY: Watch out Mark he's got a knife.

LAPE: I'll cut your.....

MARK: You'll cut nothing.

(FIGHT SOUNDS)

LAPE: You won't.....

MARK: How do you like this one!

(SOCK ON JAW)

(BODY FALL)

CHERRY: The other one, Mark. He's running away.

MARK: Andy! Again.

(ANDY SNARLS)

JEFF: No, no.....call him off, Mister.

MARK: Just don't move and he wont. Guard, Andy, Guard.

(ANDY GROWLS)

CHERRY: Oh, Mark, Mark.....I thought.....

MARK: Take it easy, Cherry. Explanations can wait until we get these two to a sherrif's office.

MUSIC: -- BRIDGE --

MA: It beats me Mark. Two fruit tramps causing all that trouble.

MARK: Well Lafe found the apple in the crates you sent to the warehouse, Jeff knew it's value. So the two of them tried turn that knowledge to their own unlawful profit.

CHERRY: They were will to kill for that profit. I know.

MARK: Well it's all over now Cherry.

CHERRY: Except to see if these branches we pruned from that tree will bear the same kind of fruit next year.

MA: Well if care will do it, they will, because I'm going to treat these little transplantings like they were my own flesh and blood.

MARK: You'll keep us posted, Ma.

MA: Sure thing, Mark.

CHERRY: I never though one variety of apple could cause so much trouble.

MARK: Why not, Cherry. It happened once before. Don't forget, a girl named Eve started quite a headache with one apple in the garden of Eden.

MUSIC: -- CURTAIN --